

Tipton Slasher Heritage Trail



VISITORS' GUIDE

WILLIAM PERRY 'THE TIPTON SLASHER'

William Perry, the bare-knuckle boxer, is fondly remembered as 'The Tipton Slasher'. Born in Tipton in 1819, Perry initially worked as a canal boatman. According to local legend, he honed his boxing skills by fighting other canal workers to gain priority at the canal locks. By his late teens, Perry had become a nationally renowned boxing celebrity. He trained at the Fountain Inn on Owen Street and held the title of 'Champion of England' from 1850 to 1857.

Accounts of Perry's fighting style note that he had a crooked or 'K' shaped leg. However, this did not hinder him in the ring, with one writer observing 'those who had seen him fight knew well with what wonderful quickness and agility he could turn and wheel, pivot-like, on that crooked pin'. His nickname is said to have come from his unconventional 'slashing' style of punching.

Perry's reign as champion ended after seven years when he lost his title to up and coming boxer Tom Sayers in a fight on the Isle of Grain on 16 June 1857. Despite being the underdog, Sayers defeated the Slasher in ten rounds. Before losing to Sayers, Perry was landlord of the pub 'The Champion of England' in Spon Lane, West Bromwich. Unfortunately, he was so confident of beating the newcomer that he sold the pub and staked the proceeds on himself along with the rest of his money and valuables. This was a superstition with the Slasher, who believed that if he backed himself to win then he could not lose.

Following his unexpected defeat, Perry briefly became landlord of the Bricklayer's Arms in Wolverhampton before his life turned full circle and he returned to working on the canals. He died at his home in Bilston on 24 December 1880.

A COMPLETE RECORD OF HIS FIGHTS

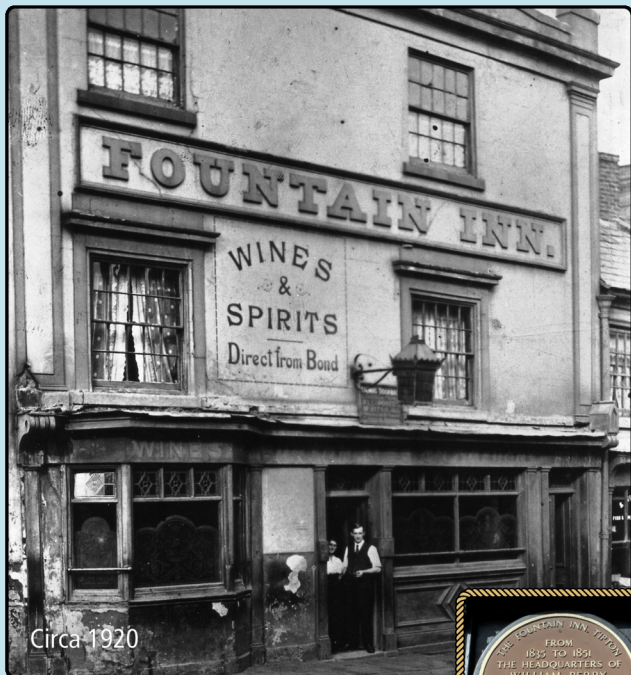
| 6 WINS, 3 LOSSES, 2 DRAWS | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|------------|
| RESULT | OPPONENT | DATE | LOCATION | DURATION |
| Win | Barney Dogherty | 3 November 1835 | Mortlake & Lechmere Common, London | 14 rounds |
| Win | Ben Spilsbury | 27 December 1836 | Oldbury, West Midlands | 19 rounds |
| Win | Jem Scunner | 22–23 November 1837 | Gornal and Wolverhampton | |
| Draw | Charles Freeman | 6 December 1842 | Sawbridgeworth | 70 rounds |
| Loss | Charles Freeman | 20 December 1842 | Cliffe Marshes, Gravesend | 38 rounds |
| Draw | Tass Parker | 19 December 1843 | Dartford Marshes | 67 rounds |
| Win | Tass Parker | 27 February 1844 | Horley | 133 rounds |
| Win | Tass Parker | 4 August 1846 | Lindrick Common | 23 rounds |
| Win | Tom Paddock | 17 December 1850 | Woking Common, | 27 Rounds |
| Loss | Harry Broome | 29 September 1851 | Mildenhall | 15 rounds |
| Loss | Tom Sayers | 16 June 1857 | Isle of Grain | 10 rounds |

Bill Perry's lived the
life God gave,
He's gone to his long rest.

We'll write this line
above his grave:
'He fought and beat the best'.

A TIPTON LEGEND





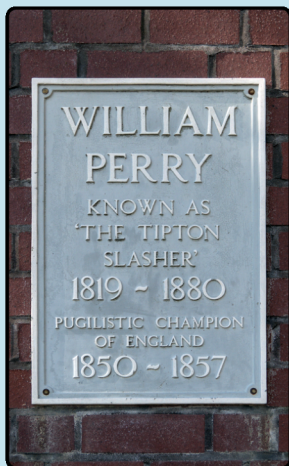
Circa 1920



The Fountain Inn is a traditional canalside pub dating back to the early 19th century. From 1835, the inn served as the headquarters of William Perry, 'The Tipton Slasher'. In Perry's time, the inn had three storeys, as seen in the vintage photograph above. Today, the Fountain Inn continues to celebrate the life and achievements of William Perry, and is the starting point of our trail.



Coronation Gardens was established in June 1953 alongside the canal in Tipton Green to commemorate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. This small public park is notable for its fine bronze statue of William Perry, sculpted by Bill Haynes. The statue was erected in 1993, commissioned by the Tipton Slasher Association, and paid for by a public fundraising campaign.

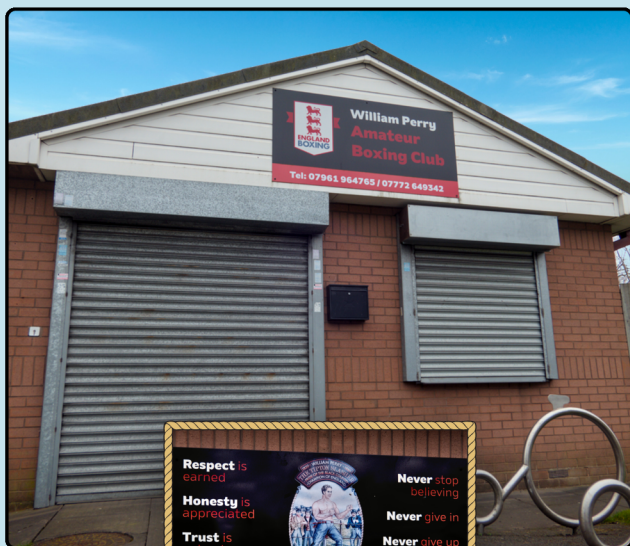




Tipton's bustling railway station features two decorative iron arches with artwork designed by Steve Field in 1988–1989. The arches were funded by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council in partnership with British Rail as part of station improvements in 1990.

The archway near the station car park and Robert Road is called 'The Slasher's Progress' and depicts various scenes from William Perry's life: towing a narrowboat; helping an opponent to his feet; his time as champion; his defeat by Tom Sayers; and his later years in the pub.

The archway leading to the ticket office showcases various Black Country scenes and includes a reference to the Tipton Slasher in a depiction of a boxer pummeling a punch bag hanging from a tree. Sadly, the punch bag and its chain are now missing from this scene.



William Perry Amateur Boxing Club is located at the heart of the community and is a valuable resource for local young people. The club enables local youngsters to develop physical and mental resilience, as well as the discipline and confidence instilled by boxing. Affiliated to its national governing body, the club coaches boys and girls from the age of ten upwards.

By adopting William Perry's name, the club honours Tipton's rich boxing heritage, ensuring that the legend of the Tipton Slasher continues to inspire future generations of young Black Country boxers.



The community space in Glebiefelds Library features a vibrant mural depicting the history of Tipton, with a striking image of the Tipton Slasher as its centrepiece. An art support group at Neptune Health Centre created the mural in the early 1990s.

The mural was initially displayed in the main office of the Tipton City Challenge Partnership on Owen Street before being moved to Neptune Health Centre. The artwork remained at the health centre until the Tipton Town Libraries Local History Group saved it from destruction in 2015. The mural was installed in Glebiefelds Library as part of its refurbishment and can be viewed by members of the public upon request. Please check opening times before visiting.

The photographs above show John Mason, one of the original artists, posing with the mural in 2016.



St John's Church is a Grade II listed building designed by local architect William Bourne. It served as an Anglican church from 1840 until 2002 when it closed for public worship and remained closed for fourteen years. In 2016, St John's Church Preservation Group reopened the church to begin restoration work. It is now open to visitors and has a weekly open day and café on Fridays from 10:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

The churchyard is the final resting place of William Perry, who is buried with his wife, Ann Maria Challingsworth. Ann's family is buried in a magnificent monument at the top of the main path, a short distance from the William Perry memorial.

Perry's memorial was erected by public subscription in October 1925. Almost a century later, in March 2025, a second fundraising campaign by the Tipton Town Libraries Local History Group paid for much needed repairs to the grave. To view the grave of the Tipton Slasher, follow the path into the cemetery and take the first right hand turn. His memorial is situated on the sloping grass bank on the right of this secondary pathway.

ANOTHER PLACE OF INTEREST



TIPTON LIBRARY

Mayfair Gardens, Tipton, DY4 8SR.

Please check opening times before visiting.

Tipton Library is one of the beautiful Carnegie libraries gifted to the town by the Scottish-born American industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Designed by George H. Wenyon (who also designed Dudley Library), it opened in 1906 and is distinguished by its striking design of red brick with contrasting bands of yellow terracotta.

Visitors to the library can view a fine portrait of the Tipton Slasher by an unknown artist. The painting is pictured here with Robert Hazel, Chairman of the library's history group, and Chris Smith, a local historian who meticulously researched the life of William Perry and gave many talks at the library about the Tipton Slasher. Chris is shown with a copy of his final book 'Slasher'.

The library also houses two display cabinets filled with interesting items related to the town and the history of the Black Country, and offers access to many local history books.

TIPTON TOWN LIBRARIES LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Tipton Town Libraries Local History Group was established in 2009 to protect, preserve, and promote the local history and heritage of Tipton and the Black Country. If you have an interest in local history, please consider joining our friendly group.

Discover more about the group's activities by visiting the links at our linktree: linktr.ee/ttllhg.



For other enquiries, email TTLLhistorygroup@outlook.com.

ST JOHN'S HERITAGE PROJECT

St John's Heritage Project is an exciting community project based around the restoration of the historic St John's Church. Come along to our Open Day every Friday from 10:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

To find out about our other events and to receive invitations, please email savestjohnschurch@hotmail.co.uk. We'd also love it if you joined the Friends of St John's to help with restoration costs.

St John's Church Preservation Group, St John's Road,
Kates Hill, Dudley, DY2 7JT.

Tel: 07871 195042 or 07522 184461.

The history group would like to thank the following for their help and support with this project:

A&A Walters Funeral Directors

Black Country Bugle

Keith Hodgkins

Kieron Hazel

St John's Church Preservation Group

Tipton and Coseley Building Society

The Village Voice

Special thanks to our American Tipton family, Robert, Mary, and Ashley, for their continued support. The Tipton Slasher Heritage Trail is dedicated to the memory of their beloved son and brother, Ryan.

PRINTED BY EASY PRINTS

www.easyprints4u.com

PRODUCED BY THE TIPTON TOWN LIBRARIES LOCAL HISTORY GROUP
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ST JOHN'S HERITAGE PROJECT.



Tipton Town Libraries
Local History Group
TTLLhistorygroup@outlook.com

